How The Casualty Figures are Rigged, P. 3

The Quality of That Freedom Johnson Claims to Be Defending in Vietnam

"We are there because . . . we remain fixed on the pursuit of freedom as a deep and moral obligation. . . . To defend that freedom—to permit its roots to deepen and grow . . . is our purpose in South Vietnam."

—Johnson to the AFL-CIO Convention, Dec. 9.

"Saigon, Dec. 9 (Los Angeles Times Service)—The South Vietnamese government has closed down a Catholic weekly newspaper that crusaded for a representative form of government, it was learned today. A Psychological War Ministry spokesman said the newspaper had been ordered to cease publication 'for not observing censorship regulations.' . . . [It] has in recent weeks criticized the 'undemocratic government'. . . . [It] was the official organ of the Greater Union Force, which purports to represent Catholic refugees from North Vietnam and Viet-Cong dominated areas in the South."

—Washington Post, Dec. 10.

I. F. Stone's Weekly

VOL. XII, NO. 43 DECEMBER 20, 1965 WASHINGTON, D. C. 15 CENTS

No Way to Celebrate Christmas

Last Christmas Eve the Viet Cong blew up a U.S. Officers' billet in Saigon; they killed two Americans and wounded 68 others. This year they proposed a 12 hour Christmas Eve truce. Our government has brushed the offer aside. At first the suggested truce was not even reported by U.S. correspondents in Vietnam, perhaps by voluntary censorship. It was the publication by the *Washington Post* of a Victor Zorza dispatch in the *Manchester Guardian* which broke the blockade of silence. In the current atmosphere of party-line acquiescence in whatever the government says, there was little if any comment. Only Senator Robert F. Kennedy had the good sense and the humanity to speak up. "I think we are getting into a more dangerous situation for all mankind," Senator Kennedy said in New York City. "We all have responsibilities now to explore all the positions." Senator Kennedy thought the U.S. should take the initiative and suggest a longer Christmas truce as a possible prelude to peace negotiations. Only one paper, the *New York Herald-Tribune* (Dec. 10) gave his suggestions the treatment they deserved. The outside world knows but most Americans are only dimly aware, if at all, that a Christmas truce was proposed.

The VC on Madison Avenue

From the most superficial point of view, this treatment was not very clever. Any junior public relations man would have seen the offer as the occasion for a ploy putting the other side off balance. From the standpoint of troop morale, the dismissal of the offer may prove unwise if there should be a Christmas Eve attack when our troops are warming up for a little holidaying. One spokesman in Saigon told the AP a holiday truce would be "nice" but "we're afraid that with these people it will be business as usual." (*Wash. Star*, Dec. 12). But we weren't asked to suspend guard duty Christmas Eve. An attack after we had accepted would be a black mark for the other side in the eyes of world opinion. If anyone thinks world opinion doesn't count in this war, he need only look at the reluctance, even among our NATO allies, to respond to our request for token aid in Vietnam. Such treachery on the part of the Viet Cong would for once put them in the wrong. Now if another barracks should be blown up Christmas Eve, people will think we were unwise to turn down the truce and incompetent to be caught off guard. The net effect is to make it look as if this little underdeveloped Asian nation can outwit the great U.S.A. not only in combat but even in the sophisticated game of public relations—right on Madison Avenue as well as in the jungle.

That Amputation on TV

A U.S. Marine Colonel allowed a TV crew to take pictures of his leg being amputated after he was wounded near Danang. "I hope they show that film to the demonstrators at Berkeley," a Marine standing nearby said bitterly. Does he think those opposed to this war will be less opposed when they see so vividly the terrible suffering it entails?

We believe the reason for this lies deeper than the usual bureaucratic lack of empathy. The whole direction of our policy is to picture Vietnam's insurgents not as men but as a kind of vermin to be exterminated; this is what lies behind the loathsome policy of counting (and miscounting) bodies as if this were a rat-killing campaign. Some IBM Clausewitz seems to think that the war will be won when our computers show more killed than theirs. Suddenly to accept the humane gesture of a Christmas truce—especially from forces we like to picture as godless—would restore a fraternal face to the enemy we want to keep faceless. When Secretary Rusk was asked on educational TV Dec. 9, what could be offered the other side as quid pro quo in a negotiated settlement, he dismissed this unctuously as the mistaken notion "that the burglar or the robber is entitled to something." But a large part of the neutral world thinks it is we who are guilty in Vietnam of breaking and entering. Unconditional surrender obviously is again our aim, and the threat of complete and utter destruction the means by which we hope to achieve it. Little by little our escalation threatens not only to destroy the fighters but the entire country, North and South, including the innocent and the friendly. This is *our* Christmas message. How few seem to recognize its unholy incongruity! In trying to dehumanize the enemy, we have succeeded in dehumanizing ourselves. A once flaming faith has become a faith in napalm.

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Brazil's Military Find Devices for All They Need Except A Legal Opposition

Why LBJ May Prefer Rusk to Bundy—What Ayub May Lack the Tact to Say

We don't know why McGeorge Bundy left the White House but we can easily imagine the kind of rifts which arose between a man as vain as Lyndon Johnson and a man as smug as Bundy. Johnson likes the men around him psychically broken to take anything he cares to dish out. He doesn't like Easterners anyway, especially Harvard men, who rub his inferiority complex the wrong way. I suspect the trouble became serious with Bundy's mission to the Dominican Republic, where he found himself at cross-purposes with Johnson's favorite Tom Mann. Bundy proved right in the end. Johnson must have found this hard to forgive. When the full story of Bundy's work is known, my guess is that the most creditable part will be his effort, slowly succeeding, to unfreeze West Germany's relations with East Europe. Johnson's preference for Rusk is revealing; he will never find a trace in the Secretary of an abominable No-Man. . . .

Embarrassing Parallel

The conversation between Johnson and Ayub Khan of Pakistan must have had at least one embarrassing pause. Pakistan's claim to Kashmir rests on United Nations decisions in 1948 and 1949 which brought about a cease fire on the promise that the Kashmiris were to have a free choice by plebiscite of whether they wished to join their fellow Moslems in Pakistan. No one doubts what their choice would be. India has had to jail Kashmir's leaders and impose police state rule on its people ever since to maintain its hold. To argue the point, must have taken consummate tact on Ayub's part, since India's course on Kashmir so strikingly resembles ours on South Vietnam: an international body promised a plebiscite to win a cease-fire; we opposed it fearing the outcome; police state regimes have been necessary ever since to combat popular unrest. Yet Johnson would like Pakistan to send troops to Vietnam to help reinforce what it objects to so strongly at home, the denial of the right to self-determination.

The Brazilian Embassy sent us a press release announcing another "constitutional reform." Under it the Brazilian Congress has to act within 45 days on any proposed legislation submitted to it by the President, or it becomes law. Brazilian legislators are to be denied the privilege even of dragging their heels. Castelo Branco already has the power to remove any member of Congress who displeases him, and the government can jail anyone whose criticism passes vague bounds. Such reforms make it easy to understand why Brazil's new military rulers are finding it hard to organize their new "two-party system." The pro-government party is ready to go, but according to Nathan Miller from Rio in the *Baltimore Sun* Dec. 11, there is trouble rounding up a legal opposition. The *Wall Street Journal* Dec. 13 quoted one Brazilian editor as quipping that this would only give the country a choice "between a 'yes' party and a 'yes, sir' party." But in Brazil, as for Negroes in our South, it is dangerous not to add the "sir."

Will of the People Dept.

"The real problem is whether South Vietnam is going to be left free to live out its own life as the South Vietnamese people themselves determine it to be. . . . You see, Mr. Niven, that the American people really do believe that simple notion imbedded in our Declaration of Independence—that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed."

—Secretary Rusk on Educational TV Dec. 7.

"Saigon, Dec. 10 (French Press Agency)—A popular demonstration, recalling those of last September in Quang Nam, took place on Dec. 8 in the province of Binh Dinh, 460 kilometers northeast of Saigon. According to reports reaching Saigon, several hundred peasants of An-Nhon district organized a demonstration to protest against the bombardment of the hamlets in that region. They went to the district capital, where troops on guard ma le use of their firearms. Some dead and wounded are reported among the demonstrators. A number were arrested."

—Le Monde, Dec. 11. Not in the U.S. press.

What the AFL-CIO Doesn't Know And the State Dept's Alexis Johnson Didn't Tell Them

A major cause of trouble in South Vietnam has been the failure of the Diem regime and its successors to carry out a satisfactory land reform. Yet Deputy Under Secretary Alexis Johnson had the effrontery to praise Diem's pseudo land reform and that of his successors in an address to the AFL-CIO convention Dec. 9. To give readers a glimpse of just how bad the land problem remains in South Vietnam and of how landlord-minded its ruling military continue to be, we present this from a rare interview by Richard Critchfield (Washington Star *Dec. 5) with Brigadier Gen. Nguyen Duc Thang, Secretary of State for Rural Construction:*

"Q. How many landless farmers are there in South Vietnam? A. There are now 659,000 renting their rice fields from others, 565,000 in the southern half of the country and 94,000 in Central Vietnam.

Q. Since only 260,000 out of 1.2 million farms are owner operated in the Mekong Delta and 520,000 farms entirely rented, how could this land be redistributed on an equitable basis? A. Laws governing land reform in Vietnam authorize each individual to own a maximum of 100 hectares. Lands which are not exploited by their owners and rented to others come to 1,320,000 hectares. If the expropriation concerning these lands is necessary for an equal distribution or for sale by installments to farmers who are tilling them, an average price of 12,000 piastres (around $120) per hectare should be paid to the landowners.

"Q. How much would it cost to pay the landowners if the U.S. were to underwrite such a land reform program? A. Nearly 15.8 billion piastres (around $158 million).

"Q. Land rents are legally fixed at 25 percent of the crop but villagers tell me they must pay anywhere from 50 to 70 percent to the owner. How can legal land rents be enforced? A. Farmers who pay more than the legal percentage may make a claim to recover excess land rent. The fact is, rents from 50 to 70 percent are rare; since the income lies in the hands of the tenants, how can we oblige them to pay more than the legal amount? Actually, there are now a certain number of farmers who take advantage of the insecure situation in the countryside and the complicated procedures governing lawsuits, and refuse to pay rent to the landowners."

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As to the Viet Cong: If So Many Are Killed, Why Are So Few Weapons Recovered?

How U.S. Casualty Figures Are Made to Look Smaller Than They Are

By Denis Warner

The following article, from the Dec. 7 issue of the Sydney, Australia, Morning Herald, is by an Australian newspaperman who has been covering the wars in Indochina since 1946. He is a frequent contributor to The New Republic and the Reporter. His most recent book was "The Last Confucian" (1963), a study of the Diem regime.

American Army public relations in Saigon are the worst I have known in any war anywhere. And for the record that includes World War II, the Korean War, the Indo-China War, the war in Vietnam and sundry emergencies and revolutions elsewhere. It was easier to tell the true story of the war in Indo-China under the strict censorship then applying, than it is under the current Saigon system. Even at the worst periods of the Indo-China war the French only concealed (and sometimes expelled), but the current crop of American public relations officers, led by Col. Ben W. Leagre and Lt. Col. Dan Biondi, are engaged in the business of turning defeat into victory.

McNamara Always Surprised

Mr. Robert McNamara, United States Secretary of Defense, expressed surprise at the end of his recent visit to Saigon that the Vietcong and the Vietminh had been able to mount such a military effort. McNamara, who was once talking about sending some of the American troops home for Christmas, 1963, has been surprised for years. And well he might be if he pays any attention to some of the news as its emerges after treatment in the Saigon public relation mills.

At a dinner in Saigon the night I arrived there from Laos at the end of October, Biondi explained the casualty formula. Under the rules imposed by his organization there were only three categories of casualties, light, moderate and heavy. When announcing friendly casualties the rules stipulate that losses in the smallest subordinate unit shall be diluted by measuring the rate against the total force engaged. A company may be wiped out in its entirety in an ambush, for example, but if it formed part of a two battalion force then the casualties would be only "light," or at worst "moderate" though the remainder of the battalion neither fired nor were fired at. On one occasion recently, the Australian battalion was thrown into the picture to make up the numbers so that extremely heavy casualties suffered by two companies could then be minimized. What was widely proclaimed as a tremendous victory assumed a very different countenance when measured against all the facts.

A singularly unfortunate emphasis on the kill ratio, the yardstick by which trends are so unwisely measured, seems to lie behind the thinking of men like Biondi. According to the original version, the kill ratio has been mounting from less than three earlier in the year to about four now. Both the kills and the counts themselves are highly suspect. In the week ended November 3 for example, the Vietcong lost 1,264 killed. Yet those who were so busy counting bodies managed to pick up only 317 weapons.

While such a large discrepancy remains between Vietcong killed and weapons captured, it is inevitable that suspicions will remain that the bodies are not counted at all, but only guessed, or that the innocent are included among the guilty. In any event, if the public relations officers took time off to study the Indo-China war and learned that the kill ratio then was 7:1 in the French favor, they might appreciate that the numbers game in which they have become engaged is extremely dangerous. Military difficulties and reverses are acceptable to most nations. What we will not accept indifferently, and especially in a war of this sort is the persistent attempt to win by pretense what has not been won on the ground.

Should We Now Add Censorship to Lying?

"One problem which cannot be ignored much longer concerns the reporting of the war. No newspaper likes to ask for outside restrictions. . . . But, quite apart from the serious matter of security, dispatches which are based on incomplete information or faulty understanding, photographs which one-sidedly emphasize the ghastly aspects of combat and TV shows which outdo the photographs in their sensationalism can have a devastating impact on home-front morale. As the casualties mount—whatever the difficulties—the government simply cannot fail to impose some reasonable restraint on coverage of the fighting."

—Editorial in the Washington Sunday Star, Dec. 12.

What's More Sacred Than The Boston Tea Party? But Don't Dare Emulate It

"Practically everyone in America pays homage to the right of protest. The Boston Tea Party is taught in our schools as an heroic event. The very first amendment to the Constitution gives a high degree of legal protection to the right of protest. And no doubt pro-McCarthy historians will one day contend that he was doing very little more than exercising his right of protest against Communists in the Government. Yet, despite all this, the right of protest is far from safe in America today. Lip service is being combined with erosion of its substance.

"The President defends the right of protest, but sets his Attorney General about the task of investigating Communist infiltration among the protesters. The Secretary of State says the Government should not interfere with free discussion and free assembly and then adds that Hanoi is hoping American domestic pressure will somehow turn the hand of the United States. Mr. J. Edgar Hoover, head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, gives Fourth of July orations on free speech, but uses the secret files of his agency to bring the public wrath down upon the head of anyone who questions the infallibility of his Bureau. The House Un-American Activities Committee, while mouthing the usual platitudes about free speech, treats any criticism of the Committee as proof of disloyalty. Congress, hitting back at protests, makes it a crime punishable by five years in jail to dramatize protest against our Vietnamese policy by burning a draft card. And the head of Selective Service approves the drafting of students who sit in at their local draft-board headquarters. . . . Protest in America has been both a vehicle on the road to justice and an escape hatch for tensions resulting from injustice. We stand by and watch the erosion of the right to protest at our peril."

—Jos. L. Rauh, Jr., vice chairman of ADA at the annual meeting of the ACLU, Pittsburgh, Pa., Dec. 8.

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How to Make A Peace Note Sound As Offensive and Unacceptable As Possible

Exclusive: The Text of Our Note on the Bombing Lull and Hanoi's Reaction

Here is the text, as disclosed for the first time by Hanoi radio Dec. 10, of the State Department note to it on the bombing lull last May and of how it appears in Hanoi's eyes. We thought readers would like to see both for themselves:

The Text of the U.S. Note

"The highest authority in this government has asked me to inform Hanoi that there will be no air attacks on North Vietnam for a period beginning at noon Washington time, Wednesday, 12 May, and running into next week. In this decision, the U.S. Government has taken account of repeated suggestions from various quarters, including public statements by Hanoi representatives, that there can be no progress toward peace while there are air attacks on North Vietnam. The U.S. Government remains convinced that the underlying cause of trouble in Southeast Asia is armed action against the people and government of South Vietnam by forces whose actions can be decisively affected from North Vietnam.

"The United States will be very watchful to see whether in this period of pause there are significant reductions in such armed actions by such forces. The United States must emphasize that the road toward the end of armed attacks against the people and government of Vietnam is the only road which will permit the government of Vietnam and the government of the United States to bring a permanent end to their air attacks on North Vietnam.

"In taking this action, the United States is well aware of the risk that a temporary suspension of these air attacks may be understood as an indication of weakness, and it is therefore necessary for me to point out that if this pause should be misunderstood in this fashion by any party, it would be necessary to demonstrate more clearly than ever after the pause ended that the United States is determined not to accept aggression without reply in Vietnam. Moreover, the United States must point out that the decision to end air attacks for this limited trial period is one which it must be free to reverse, if, at any time in coming days, there should be actions by the other side in Vietnam which required immediate reply.

"But my government is very hopeful that there will be no such misunderstanding and that this first pause in air attacks may meet with a response which will permit further and more extended suspension of this form of military action in expectation of equal constructive actions by the other side in the future."

Were Five Days Enough?

"Was the 5-day pause long enough? . . . If the North Vietnamese were interested . . . Hanoi at the very least would have had to consult Moscow, placate its own hawks and persuade Peking to let it accept the proferred American feeler. In a far more clear-cut and vital situation—that of Soviet missiles in Cuba—involving merely the coordination of several Government departments within one city, Washington took longer than that to make up its mind."

—Bernard Fall in N.Y. Times Sun. Magazine, Dec. 12. He quotes Seaborn, Canadian member of the Geneva control commission, "If it had been a 5-month pause, they might have attached more significance to it."

How Hanoi Saw the Bombing Lull

"Making black white, the message slanderously charged North Vietnam with aggression against South Vietnam and threatened that if the South Vietnamese people did not stop their self-liberation fight, the U.S. would continue to bomb the north. In its essence, the message was an ultimatum to the Vietnamese people, urging the South Vietnamese to abandon their patriotic struggle as a condition for a halt in the bombing of the DRV. . . . Who gives the U.S. the right to bomb, stop bombing, then resume bombing North Vietnam at any moment they like? Who gives them the right to invade South Vietnam, massacre the South Vietnam people, then to urge them to lay down their arms . . . otherwise they should bomb the north even more intensively? . . . Who gives the U.S. the right to urge the North Vietnamese people [to] . . . let the aggressors freely massacre their kith and kin in the South? . . . It must also be pointed out that the U.S. imperialists deeds never match with their words. In the periods of the so-called suspension of the bombings over North Vietnam from 12 to 17 May this year, U.S. aircraft and warships continued to encroach upon the territorial waters of the DRV for spying, provocative and raiding activities. Two U.S. F-105 jetfighters were down over Nghe on 13 and 17 May respectively. Meanwhile, the U.S. brought to South Vietnam (? over 140,000) more combat troops and the U.S.—puppets intensified their ground and air raids against the population. On 14 May alone, U.S. puppet aircraft flew 186 sorties."

The Weekly is not published the last Monday in December and the first Monday in January. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all our readers, friend or foe

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I. F. Stone's Weekly
5618 Nebraska Ave., N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20015

Second class postage paid at Washington, D. C.

NEWSPAPER

I. F. Stone's Weekly. Second Class Postage Paid at Washington, D. C. Published every Monday except in August, the last week in December and the first week in January and Bi-Weekly during July at 5618 Nebraska Ave., N.W., Washington, D. C. An independent weekly published and edited by I. F. Stone; Circulation Manager, Esther M. Stone. Subscription: $5 in the U.S.; $6 in Canada; $10 elsewhere. Air Mail rates: $15 to Europe; $20 to Israel, Asia and Africa.

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